



SEAPORT

NORTH CENTRAL IDAHO: CLEARWATER, IDAHO, LATAH, LEWIS, & NEZ PERCE COUNTIES

LABOR FORCE & EMPLOYMENT

As shown in Seaport Table 1, the Seaport's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for March remained unchanged from at February's rate of 4.4 percent. In March 2000, the rate was 3.6 percent. Total employment decreased 150 from February and 1,100 from March of last year. March total unemployed remained unchanged from February's level, but was up 250 from March 2000. The good news is that weather in March was mild, which is unusual but allowed outdoor work in construction and agriculture to continue. Traditionally, March is a month when outdoor work is sluggish.

In March, Seaport's *Nonfarm Wage & Salary Employment* decreased by 160 jobs from February 2001; from March 2000 the decrease was even larger at 670. Decreases from last month and last year occurred in almost all industries. Only two industries, *Finance, Insurance & Real Estate* and *Government*, posted increases. However, these increases were so slight that they were nearly covered up by the rounding process.

SPECIAL TOPIC:

Unemployment Insurance

Stabilizing the Economy: Besides helping unemployed individuals and families transition from one job to another, Unemployment Insurance (UI) acts as an automatic economic stabilizer. In a recession, UI benefits offset some of the effects of job losses on a community's spending power. Because UI benefits allow unemployed individuals and their families to continue to pay their bills, it helps maintain incomes and spending power of the stores, landlords, banks, and service providers in the community. UI softens the blow and reduces the snowball effect of job losses.

Retaining a Local Workforce: Unemployment Insurance promotes stability by making it possible for employers to retain workers during the off-season or during a short downturn. Many seasonal industries would find it much more difficult to attract and retain employees if their workers could not rely on UI to support them through the off-season.

Seaport Table 1: Labor Force & Employment
Nez Perce County, Idaho, and Asotin County, Washington

	March 2001*	Feb 2001	March 2000	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	33,780	33,930	34,630	-0.4	-2.5
Unemployment	1,480	1,480	1,230	0.0	20.3
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.4	4.4	3.6		
Total Employment	32,300	32,450	33,400	-0.5	-3.3
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	34,450	34,900	34,910	-1.3	-1.3
Unemployment	1,820	1,990	1,510	-8.5	20.5
% of Labor Force Unemployed	5.3	5.7	4.3		
Total Employment	32,630	32,910	33,400	-0.9	-2.3
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**					
Goods-Producing Industries	4,980	5,140	5,330	-3.1	-6.6
Mining & Construction	1,190	1,210	1,190	-1.7	0.0
Manufacturing	3,790	3,930	4,140	-3.6	-8.5
Food Processing	70	70	120	0.0	-41.7
Lumber & Wood Products	710	740	800	-4.1	-11.3
Paper Products	1,710	1,780	1,830	-3.9	-6.6
All Other Manufacturing	1,300	1,340	1,390	-3.0	-6.5
Service-Producing Industries	20,300	20,300	20,620	0.0	-1.6
Transportation	1,350	1,360	1,320	-0.7	2.3
Communications & Utilities	290	290	300	0.0	-3.3
Wholesale Trade	930	940	970	-1.1	-4.1
Retail Trade	5,130	5,110	5,260	0.4	-2.5
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	1,410	1,440	1,420	-2.1	-0.7
Services	6,800	6,830	7,070	-0.4	-3.8
Government Administration	1,870	1,850	1,760	1.1	6.3
Government Education	2,520	2,480	2,520	1.6	0.0
*Preliminary Estimate					
**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month					

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Clearwater County

- Communities located along the trail used by the Lewis-Clark expedition are getting ready to celebrate the expedition's bicentennial. The Pink Hole House, an 18-unit public campground situated three miles west of Orofino on U.S. Highway 12, is one of the first of many planned campgrounds to be completed. The Pink House Hole campground will provide full hook-ups for 15 RV's, three tent campsites, and two picnic area pavilions. The campground is half a mile from Canoe Camp, where the Lewis-Clark party stopped to make dugout canoes for their trip downriver to the Pacific. Over two million people are expected to tour North Central Idaho for the bicentennial.
- Verizon Communication has installed a new digital switch as part of a \$2 million project to revamp the local telephone network and provide more services to customers. The new switch was activated in April, and is expected to provide faster, more reliable telephone service to the 4,000 cus-

tomers lines in Orofino's 476 prefix. Verizon is planning a similar conversion in Peck, for the 250 customers with the 486 prefix. "This newer generation of digital technology will improve the quality of service for our Orofino and Peck customers and strengthen the area's potential for economic growth," said Darin French, Verizon's local manager based in Moscow.

Idaho County

- The Idaho Public Utilities Commission has approved construction of a fiber-optic line that will close the gap between southern and northern Idaho. Citizens Telecommunications plans to build the fiber-optic route between Riggins and Grangeville, pending completion of the sale of eight local telephone exchanges from Qwest to Citizens. The sale is expected to close late summer or early fall. The commission said the cost of building the fiber-optic line, estimated to be \$3.8 million, will be paid from a portion of the gain on the sale of exchanges in Cottonwood, Craigmont, Grangeville, Kamiah, Kooskia, Lapwai, Nezperce, and Lewiston. There is no connection now between those eight exchanges and Southern Idaho. All calls south are currently routed to Spokane and then to Boise.
- Construction has begun on a new USDA Agriculture Service Center in Grangeville. Earth moving and site preparation at the former Mini Con on U.S. 95 is making way for the new center which will house four offices—Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Idaho County Soil, and Water Conservation District, Rural Development.
- A salvage deal has been reached with a Montana company for the ties and rails of the approximate 67-mile Camas Prairie RailNet (CPR) line between Spalding and Grangeville. Klamert Railroad Salvage Company of Silesia Montana will conduct the contract salvage for an undisclosed amount. Work is pending —CPR's meeting the requirements, which were set up by the Surface Transportation Board in its decision, last fall to approve abandonment of the line. The bridges and trestles are not a part of this salvage deal.

Latah County

- Horizon will increase service to the Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport. More comfortable and larger aircrafts will replace the 37-seat commuter planes currently being used by Horizon. The new aircraft seats 70 passengers, have more legroom, and are quieter. With a top speed of 420 mph, the planes are almost as fast as a jet. The bottom line for passengers is flights will be shorter. Horizon will also be adding some new equipment to the airport, such as a conveyor belt baggage loader.

Lewis County

- The new Kamiah Physical Therapy Clinic has opened and is taking patients. The clinic is administered by St. Mary's Hospital (Cottonwood) Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Department. The clinic is wheelchair accessible, and has a modern array of therapy and aerobic machines.

Nez Perce County

- The Regence Group has announced plans to create at least 100 new jobs and will become the anchor tenant in Lewiston's new business and technology park. The newly created positions will be primarily for health insurance claim analysts. The Regence Group, parent company of Lewiston-based Regence BlueShield of Idaho, will begin hiring for the new claims processing business in June. The company's decision to build in Lewiston's new technology and business park north of Thain Grade secures grant money needed to complete construction of the entire business park. Recruitment and hiring will begin in June, with training conducted at an interim site until a new building is completed (summer of 2002) at the technology and business park.
- Within days of the Regence announcement, Tele-Servicing Innovations (TSI) announced plans to hire 250 people to work in a contact center that will open later this year in Lewiston's new business and technology park. Employees at the contact center will respond to customer e-mail, engage in live Web chats and make phone contacts on behalf of major companies such as HBO and Time Warner Cable. Beginning wages at the contact center will be in the \$9 to \$10 per hour range. In addition, 30 or so management positions that pay up to \$65,000 per year will be filled locally.
- In April, Idaho's Governor Dirk Kempthorne visited Lewiston to sign three appropriation bills. The first appropriation will pay the salaries for 45 people to operate the new Idaho Juvenile Corrections Department's Lewiston Center located on the City's southern edge. The facility will gear up in the next couple of months and is expecting the first of 36 prisoners—males aged 10 to 20, judged to be moderate to high risk—to arrive July 10. The second and third appropriations signed were for a new gymnasium and activities Center at Lewis-Clark State College's new gymnasium and activities Center and for refurbishing and expanding the interpretive center at Hell's Gate State Park's refurbished and expanded interpretive center.
- In concluding this month's development section, a new sporting goods store in Lewiston is reeling in customers in search of fly fishing equipment, and muzzle loading and archery supplies. Mark Lamb has opened The Traditional Sportsman at 814 Main Street. The store is next to Hills Valley Floral and Gifts, which is operated by his wife Gayla.

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